

## A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF..... by Nancy Knudsen



It all began after my 11-year old dog died. Such a traumatic event turned my world upside down and after having two special Keeshonds consecutively in my life, I couldn't imagine not having one. Because I was so upset and I wanted to make sure I was not rebounding in getting another Keeshond, I volunteered for a local rescue organization to foster some mixed breed dogs in a three month period, with the end result of obtaining these now lucky dogs wonderful loving "forever" homes. At this time I also realized that who was I kidding – I really needed my Keeshond fix ... I just didn't feel like me anymore.

Now I was in the predicament as to where to get one. I had already been through showing and obedience with my last two Keeshonds and realized that since I had moved into the country it would be much more difficult to do this and in truth my heart wasn't there anymore. I enjoy my beautiful country area and now town is a place to do my errands and then go home. I thought about my foster rescues and it all became very clear to me that here was where I

could do most good, in giving an unfortunate rescue Keeshond a loving country home. It was good to see that my search took some time as there was actually a dearth of rescue Keeshonds in Canada and was therefore even searching States side (good for Kees but not so good for me). Then it happened! I got a line on a year old male neutered Keeshond in rescue who was the result of a "large scale commercial breeder". After convincing Hopeful Hearts Rescue (a wonderful rescue organization) that I was interested in this traumatized dog and had experience with rehabilitating animals of all kinds, they relinquished "Treu" (meaning 'loyal' in German) to my care and I had now adopted a Kees (yahoo).

When I went to pick him up at the airport from his midnight flight, my first sight of Treu was him standing in his flight crate looking out the grated door. I thought to myself "hmm, looking good and not too intimidated". (Well, the next few months would certainly prove me wrong.) When I got him home, I placed his crate in the kitchen segregated from the rest of the house, gave him water and offered him treats but he timidly remained in his crate. After laying down piddle pads, I went to bed (now 2 a.m.) and left him to adjust to his new environment. In the morning I coaxed him out of the crate and saw my sad specimen -- with the haunted look in his eyes, his dry patchy looking fur and his spindly legs. I almost cried for him but I was so happy to have him and knew I could give him a country heaven on earth.

His foster family loved this pup, initiated his rehabilitation and had informed me of his current state ... "never tried to catch him alone yet. Although it is getting easier and easier in the sense that we don't actually have to trap him anymore ... If you approach him low and with food you can often get close enough to grab him ... If we needed to get him quickly both of us try to block his escape options and he quickly figures out this is going to happen anyways and gives in. 3-5 minutes usually."

Such a sad state for a young pup/dog to be in. He was totally submissive once **"caught"** or in my arms but was frightened by any extension of hands towards him. He had evidently been **severely beaten**. I learned from daily contact with him that although he **did NOT accept hand contact**, that foot petting was ok, even enjoyable. Now foot petting is more difficult and can only be done at certain times and so it was challenging to figure out how to make human contact acceptable. I can only surmise that it was his foster family that enlightened him about the joys of grooming -- I had been informed that it took many baths to alleviate the fetid odour that clung to him and which I also had to endure for some time before his system normalized (hard to believe that it would take so long and of which I believe most people are unaware). These grooming sessions were my bonding time with Treu. It amazed me to see this overall frightened furball accept my brushing and as the session advanced stretch out on the floor yawning and relaxed. However, it was short-lived; as soon as the session was over so was the relaxation and he was on guard again. Oh, how my heart went out to him.



When outside, Treu was double leashed by his collar and a harness (which he found more comfortable), as when on a collar leash only he would fight it twisting and turning frantically. The flexi-lead I used enabled him some freedom but the safety of control. It was sad to see him not knowing what to do outside, just walking gazing fearfully with no dog skills such as sniffing the snow **or anything else**, not even looking around for "interesting things". His mobility was limited as his legs were underdeveloped and his toes were spread. As he was not house trained, I had him out all hours of the day and NIGHT. He had a very short "notice period" and so if I missed his hint that he had to do his business, it got done anywhere he happened to be. I really do believe that his system was not properly developed (immature) that caused many of his accidents instead of slow learning or fear. Oh yes, there was a LOT of cleanup BUT no scolding just repetitive outings and "words" to link that it should be done outside. He was scared easily and even talking to him put him on guard by giving attention to him. I crated him at night and when he would cry to go "out" that is what I did, at all hours of the night so that he would not be soiled or uncomfortable. This took about 6 months before nightly outings were almost non-occurring. Oh, by the way, his wake up call to me was 5:30 a.m. **or earlier** so I did not get much sleep for the first few months; now it is better from 6:30 to 7:00 a.m. (hmm) if I am lucky.

I had an assistant easing Treu into our daily routine -- my foster dog, Bosco, a lovely border collie cross, who was outgoing, friendly and obedient. My philosophy with Treu was to "introduce" him gently to his new world but to generally let him accept it when he was ready. In following Bosco, Treu used Bosco as his safety monitor instead of having to rely on me -- a suspicious potentially dangerous human being. This worked in my favour as Bosco shadowed me and in the evenings Treu would eventually come to sit beside Bosco (therefore beside me), and then up on the furniture with me (at my feet at first); in time graduating to my hands being lured with treats. Exciting it was to see each step forward, even if there were many steps back in the beginning, but gradually lessening.

Treu was "on leash" for a long time when not in a fairly large outdoor run or in the house. He did not seem to be progressing enough and so I took a leap of faith with Bosco and let the two of them loose for our initial yard outings and gradually on our extended walks. It was truly joyous to see the two of them run, jump and play. Treu would now play tag with me -- still not **voluntarily** letting me touch him when outside, instead the scamp would turn it into a game of tag. At this point, Treu had evolved to putting his prior fears into "his

games of tag" both outside and in the house. It was good to see his "happy Kees face" instead of those initially "haunted eyes". Well, all except for "The Door!". For some reason, doors were EVIL and required much coaxing and assistance from Bosco showing him "in/out". Still to this day, a year later, he will sometimes RACE through the door like the devil is after him. He is still cautious of other people BUT barks at them if ignored because after all "HE is in charge", plays his tag game with them sometimes touching their hand, sleeve or pant leg, and very occasionally allowing a quick subversive pat.



to many years ahead of us, god willing.

**Precocious, talkative, demanding and affectionate** is the Treu of today, still with some quirks, like not allowing me to touch him **when outside** -- but head butting me in the morning to get his morning pat/massage, jumping all over me in the evening again to get his pats, and coming into the computer room to lie down at my feet while I am on the computer (like now). With me still fostering local rescue dogs, Treu is now also my **cotrainer** for all the foster newbies – teaching them the ropes and I might mention the FASTEST RECALLS with which the adoptive families are so impressed.

Treu is still a work in progress and continues to "give me lessons". In addition, not a day goes by that he doesn't make me laugh or happy. It is still early days for us, and I look forward